

Scientific Note

Occurrence of the Cotoneaster Webworm, *Athrips rancidella*, in California (Lepidoptera: Gelechiidae)

The Palearctic moth, *Athrips rancidella* (Herrich-Schaeffer), is widespread in Central and South Europe and occurs in Turkmenia, S.S.R., presuming the synonymy to be correct (Sattler, 1968, Dt. Ent. Zeit., N.F., 15:115; 1978, *ibid.*, 25:59). Its larvae feed on Rosaceae: *Cerasus*, *Cotoneaster*, and *Prunus*, according to records for its synonyms (Spuler, 1913, Kleinschmett. Europas, 361; Schutze, 1931, Biol. Kleinschmett., Verlag Int. Ent. Verein, 116; Busck, 1934, Proc. Ent. Soc. Wash., 36:82; Kuznetsov, 1960, Akad. Nauk SSR, Trudy, 27:34). This species was discovered at Portland and Eugene, Oregon, in 1929, and had been recorded at several sites in northern Oregon and at Vancouver, Washington, by 1934 (Roaf et al., 1937, J. Econ. Ent., 30:134). In the Pacific Northwest, larvae were found on *Cotoneaster horizontalis*, a deciduous, ornamental shrub that originated from China; and the adventive population was described as *Cremona cotoneastri* by Busck (1934, loc. cit.), in the belief that it was an undescribed species introduced from the Orient. Subsequently this moth has been collected in coastal British Columbia, Washington, and Oregon (USNM records; Hodges, in litt.).

Larvae of *A. rancidella* were found in Berkeley, California, on *Cotoneaster congesta*, by L. E. Casher and R. F. Gill, students in our Immature Insects course, in early May 1983. *C. congesta*, which is sometimes known as *C. microphylla* var. *glacialis*, is a low-growing Himalayan shrub with dense foliage, superficially resembling *C. microphylla*, and both are popular evergreen ornamentals. Another collection of larvae and pupae, made May 13, produced adults from May 17 to June 23 (JAP 83E50). Subsequent surveys of several other species of *Cotoneaster* in the vicinity did not reveal presence of the conspicuous larval damage. *C. congesta* is not a commonly used ornamental in Berkeley; *C. lactea* (= *Parneyi*) and other slender, arching species with sparse, tomentose leaves are much more abundant, at times weedy, but evidently are not selected by *A. rancidella*.

According to Roaf et al. (1937, loc. cit.) the insect is univoltine, and young larvae spend the winter in silken hibernacula on the branches. In Berkeley, most of the feeding occurred in spring, when the black larvae covered the branches with dense silken webs, from which they foraged, encompassing the entire foliage. Feeding primarily was skeletonizing of the leaf surfaces, so that the whole shrub became a caked mass of silk, frass, and brown leaves. By late July the plant showed evidence of recovery, with green foliage distally, and no larvae were discovered feeding on the new growth.

In 1984, another colony was discovered in Berkeley, by Ward Russell and W. W. Middlekauff. Larvae caused similarly conspicuous damage on the same ornamental shrub, and moths emerged in late May and the first week of June (JAP 84E126). The second site is about 1.0 airline km east of the first, at a higher elevation.

I thank R. A. Beatty, Dept. Landscape Architecture, U.C. Berkeley, for information on the cotoneasters, and R. W. Hodges, Systematic Entomology Labo-

ratory, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C., for identification of the moth and literature references.

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